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**State of Louisiana**  
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Tuesday, October 18, 2005

House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
US House of Representatives  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure:

Thank you for inviting me to testify on the vision and strategy necessary to rebuild New Orleans, Louisiana, and the entire Gulf Coast Region in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

It is my hope that the dialogue we begin will guide current and future policy decisions about the recovery and reconstruction of the Gulf South region. As your committee and Congress considers how to structure the federal recovery effort, it is important that you consider the cultural significance that New Orleans and the State of Louisiana has had on America. Collectively, we can rebuild this city to be better than it was before.

As Louisiana's Lieutenant Governor I manage the state's Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism. Our department oversees a tourism and hospitality industry that provides over 120,000 jobs and contributes approximately \$10 billion annually to the State of Louisiana. In addition, Louisiana's cultural industries provide nearly 144,000 jobs, which is approximately 7.6 % of Louisiana's employment. From a growing entertainment sector to design and architecture to our culinary experts, Louisiana's cultural economy is an important part of our overall economy.

Just days before Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, my administration released a year-long study, "Louisiana: Where Culture Means Business". This blueprint provided a detailed strategy for our state to grow Louisiana's economy through our culture. This study also pinpointed our state's natural advantage in this area:

*"Louisiana has an economic asset that other states can only dream of: a multifaceted, deeply-rooted, authentic, and unique culture. Its cultural continuum spans history and peoples, geography, and art forms. As a state that has long relied on oil, gas, and timber to fuel its economy, Louisiana is now realizing that, in culture, it may have a new source of largely untapped economic energy."*

*"Louisiana is ideally positioned to take the national lead in the creation and implementation of a statewide cultural economic development plan. While many cities and states are looking at arts and culture or creating incentives to develop film, music, and other technology-based industries, few states are approaching the cultural economy in as comprehensive a way as Louisiana."*

I believe that Louisiana can be rebuilt better than before, and can continue to impact American life for many generations to come. If New Orleans can be used as a test lab of sorts, we may be able to find answers that like Jazz and Creole cooking and Tennessee Williams plays, the rest of the country can embrace. Now is the time to envision moving beyond our potential and finally taking advantage of our diversity as a powerful strength, where our histories, our stories, our labors, and our uniqueness are celebrated as a most precious asset.

Think of educating our children differently not to meet some national standards but to exceed that expectation and go beyond, where we grow knowledge and key skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century through arts education, technology proficiency and experiential learning, starting first by learning about the wonder and uniqueness of culture in Louisiana.

The tourism, hospitality and cultural industry leaders in Louisiana understand this. We have already begun to set the tone and pace for the nation's debate on what the rebuilding of Louisiana should look like. On September 20<sup>th</sup>, my office released a strategic plan, *Louisiana Rebirth: Restoring the Soul of America*. This plan will serve as our comprehensive guide to not only reconstructing Louisiana's tourism industry, but also our Cultural Economy. We will build better lives and livelihoods than before for all Louisiana's people. And, we will do all of this by making Louisiana's recovery the standard for high performance, accountability, and ethical behavior. This plan was developed with input from the local, state and national leaders in the tourism, hospitality and cultural industries.

Our industries will require a significant level of relief as we work to recover the positive impact we have on Louisiana's economy. We have begun meeting with our Congressional Delegation to present them with our specific priorities and needs. We understand the need for fiscal accountability, results, and the highest standard of performance. On behalf of the tourism, hospitality and cultural industries, I have requested that Governor Blanco issue an executive order creating an Independent Performance Accountability Panel to work with us as we begin implementing the *Louisiana Rebirth* plan.

This is an important time of soul-searching for our nation, because the only adequate response to this tragedy must come from the entire nation. We like to say in Louisiana these days that this storm created so many everyday heroes – angels – who have reached out to their neighbors in times of need. We will soon owe a debt of gratitude to all Americans as a rebirth of Louisiana gets underway. But we are a generous people and we love nothing more than to share. So it is fair to expect those acts of kindness to be paid for in full with contributions to the greater good for many years to come.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and present my vision for Louisiana's future.

Sincerely,



Mitch Landrieu  
Lieutenant Governor

Attachments:

1. Comments delivered by Lieutenant Governor Mitch Landrieu to US Department of Commerce Conference on Cultural Heritage and Tourism, October 6, 2005
2. Draft Executive Order proposing Independent Performance Accountability Panel that Office of Lieutenant Governor has presented to Governor Kathleen Blanco.
3. *“Louisiana Rebirth, Restoring the Soul of America”* – Strategic plan developed by Office of Lieutenant Governor, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism and industry leaders.

# Higher Common Ground: “*There but for the Grace of God go I.*”

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*Speech by Lieutenant Governor Mitch Landrieu to US Department of Commerce  
Conference on Cultural Heritage and Tourism  
Thursday, October 6, 2005*

*Submitted to US Congress, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
Tuesday, October 18, 2005*

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I'm here today to bring you a message from Louisiana. In the wake of the worst natural disaster to face our nation, we have seen up close and personal a loss on a magnitude the likes of which we have never been seen before. This human tragedy has the power to transform the south and our nation. Historians have told the story of the South as one of “opportunity lost.” It is now the challenge of the nation and the people of the South to change our story into one of “opportunity found.” A time of sorrow must be transformed into a time of Hope. Because, hope springs eternal -- it allows us to wake every morning knowing that through hard work and vision we can make tomorrow better than today.

One simple idea should drive our actions. We can create a unified New South.

The New South exemplifies a place of community where our differences / much like threads of fine fabric / unite us – where educational opportunities abound. A place that understands that knowledge is the currency of a strong economy.

In this New South, our diversity is strength, not a weakness - where different philosophies, political views, religious beliefs and ethnicities are not only viewed as good but also necessary to the formation of the tapestry of our rich and beautiful culture. In this New South, we interpret the Latin term / *E Pluribus Unum* / on the seal of the country and on the steps of the Louisiana State Capitol, literally, “out of many, one.”

This New South values faith, strong families, cultural roots and the heritage of our ancestors / while at the same time, looks forward in a progressive way, excited about the possibility of what can be. We love our country in a unique and profound way.

With these hurricanes, Mother Nature has taught us a lot about our past, our future and ourselves. There has been a lot of focus on the devastation and loss wrought by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Communities across the south were brought to their knees by the force of Katrina and then again four weeks later by Hurricane Rita. We were also brought to our knees, thankful to God, for the thousands of acts of kindness and generosity given by strangers to strangers suddenly made neighbors by a common threat.

It is a tragedy of epic proportions that raised more angels than demons. Like a Greek tragedy, it has many acts.

The first act of this tragedy was the storms, the evacuations and saving lives.

Here's what we know about Hurricane Katrina: according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Hurricane Katrina is the most destructive storm to ever strike the United States. Katrina's disaster area is larger than the size of Great Britain. Compared to 1992's Hurricane Andrew with insured damages of \$21 Billion in today's dollars, Hurricane Katrina's estimated insured damages alone will top \$60 Billion.

Hurricane Rita will go down in history as having the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest barometric pressure of any storm in the Atlantic's history. Communities throughout Southwest Louisiana and Eastern Texas / a combination of oil and gas refinery workers, rice and sugar cane farmers and fishermen and shrimpers / felt Rita's full force and devastating storm surge.

Following each storm, the nation watched our citizens in the water, on boats and on rooftops. Nearly all saw news coverage of the rescue efforts of the many first responders and the glaring truth of American poverty – impoverished residents, some who did not have the resources to evacuate the largest natural disaster in the U. S. What the media didn't report were the everyday heroes, helping people with their cars, walking through waters and rescuing people off of their roofs and out of their attics. The neighbor helping his fellow neighbor or the volunteers in rescue boats, Wildlife and Fisheries agents, local law enforcement officers and firefighters all supplemented already on the ground. These courageous men and women worked back-to-back-to-back shifts for 15 days straight. They risked their lives to save fellow citizens; these are the true American Heroes of this tragedy. We will never be able to thank them enough.

Following the rescues, cities across Louisiana immediately responded to each storm by offering to house evacuees. When we ran out of space, our neighbors and friends in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Utah welcomed us in. Literally every state in the union is now providing shelter to Hurricane Katrina and Rita evacuees. To every Governor, elected official and private citizen who opened their homes and hearts, to our citizens, thank you.

If we allow this tragedy to divide us, we will fail. If we use it as an opportunity to unite us, we will be stronger as a nation.

Act II of this tragedy is recovery and assessment.

Imagine the difficulty of having 1.2 million residents – some of whom were first responders - displaced across the country from their homes, resident care facilities, hospitals, and businesses. Imagine the anxiety and fear of these residents, not knowing what happened to their loved ones while hearing reports of the death toll. It's hard to imagine this, but it's important that you try.

We hear negative statistics daily about this story. The story is this: *1168* deaths due to Katrina and *100* deaths, so far, due to Rita. [*statistics from 10/6/05*]

An initial assessment of the 10 parishes (or counties) in the Katrina zone and three in the Rita zone have been so severely affected that they require substantial, sustained investment by federal, state, and local governments and the private sector. These thirteen parishes were home to one million, seven hundred sixteen thousand, nine hundred thirty-one Louisiana citizens. 81,000 businesses have been severely impacted. This number represents roughly 41% of all Louisiana's businesses, of which 90% are small businesses. Compare these stats to 9/11, where only 50,000

businesses were dislocated. It took New York four months to plan an effective recovery program. In fact, Louisiana's state department of economic developments' counterparts in New York has praised Louisiana for its progress already made in drawing up its economic revitalization plan. We have so much hope for future rebuilding for this great state of ours, we will make it better and stronger than it was before.

We must now begin the key assessment of our nation's response. Needless to say, we must vastly improve our emergency response system, that includes: better communications technology; a clearer chain-of-command that lays out roles and responsibilities of every branch of government to get resources where they are needed immediately; and, a reorganization of the way FEMA acts and reacts systematically to prioritize saving lives and human capital before getting into the business of giving contracts for rebuilding.

The country needs to learn from everybody's experiences, mistakes, and successes – AND there were plenty of all of these. We must admit that as a nation we all failed to prepare and respond adequately. We all could have done better.

So the question for the experts is *what happened to the plan, what went right, what went wrong*. One thing we know is that Mother Nature does not discriminate and she is not partisan. She hurt rich and poor, black and white, urban and rural. As the debate occurs about how to fix a broken response system we must not allow ourselves to let the politics of the day become the focus. We must get better as a nation, because "there but for the grace of God go I." The crisis could be an earthquake on the West Coast, a tornado or flood in the Midwest. It could happen to you or someone you know. It also could be another terrorist attack at any time, in any place.

As we move through the recovery and relief act of this tragedy, it would be helpful to establish and confirm facts from rumors and speculation. The now proven sensational rumors of murders, rapes and other acts of violent crimes hindered search and recovery efforts, and further exacerbated this crisis. The media has the ethical duty to investigate allegations of violence and report the news accurately with substantiated facts. The reports of looting were blown way out of proportion. The reports of snipers cannot be confirmed. There was no hostage crisis and there was no jailbreak. Of the reported 200 deaths at the Superdome, the state administrator overseeing the body recovery operation confirmed 10! One reported death was a suicide, 2 were reported as gunshots fatalities and the remaining 7 deaths occurred due to natural causes. Nevertheless, every death diminishes us and should be mourned.

These critical breakdowns in communication also hampered officials' efforts to speak accurately on the reports of violence, inadvertently perpetuating the chaos to the media. We are all grateful officials are now scaling back their earlier estimates of 10,000 deaths. These were grossly inaccurate. Our families are still grieving for their lost loved ones across Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Florida.

Perhaps you noticed that we were able to evacuate 1 million citizens when Katrina approached. We were prepared this time with a contra flow traffic program that moved people – people who could move, based on the evacuation of Hurricane Ivan last year. Also, we had warned the nation about the poor and our immobile senior population not being able to escape, and they couldn't.

So, in this second act, I would surmise that rumors and miscommunication have distracted us from the task at hand – recovery.

Act III of this tragedy is redesign and rebuild. This is where your input and commitment will be most helpful.

As the discussions about rebuilding the South begin to take place they must start within the context of our history and our people.

Nobody can deny the contributions that the South has had on American culture. No place can replicate the feel, smell, taste or sounds of this place that has contributed so much to America's history and economy. What would our national culture be like without musical institutions like Louis Armstrong, Wynton Marsalis or Zachary Richard; or literary geniuses like the Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Tony Kushner, or National Book Circle author Ernest Gaines; or the culinary icon, the Brennan Family?

Think about Congo Square in New Orleans - Did you know that it was New Orleans native - Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869) - who was the first to couple African Rhythms he heard growing up in Congo Square with European Classical music to begin the evolution of jazz music?

South Louisiana's heritage, from Lake Charles to Lafayette to Baton Rouge to New Orleans, is a gumbo of Native Americans and exiles from Acadie in Canada, French expatriates and French Creoles, Creoles of Color, Freed People of Color, and Americans. Tradition, family, food, music and *joie de vivre* are fundamentals of life in South Louisiana. Sprinkled across South Louisiana are bayous, sugar cane and rice fields, crawfish ponds, lakes, marshes, and rivers, creating a unique landscape you can't find anywhere else in the world. Now, everything about the culture that we have shared with the nation and the world for so long comes from our people and is at risk.

For centuries, Louisiana has served as the cultural and commercial entryway to the Americas. Cargo, moving through the Port of New Orleans, impacts every aspect of America's economy from food, to oil and gas. But, the port also moves people on luxury cruise ships. The ports in Louisiana handle more than one-fifth of U.S. daily imports/exports and help move more than three-fourths of U.S. offshore oil and gas production. Prior to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Louisiana ranked first in crude oil production and second in natural gas production along the Outer Continental Shelf.

Most of the levees on the Mississippi River held strong during the storm. These protection levees were built by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers in the 1920s and '30s to control the Mississippi River and offer security to people living in flood plains and low lying areas. However these same levees have destroyed Louisiana's primary hurricane protection, America's Wetland, by not allowing the river to deposit silt in the marshes and coastal areas to replenish the land. We have a clear need to protect our populations with the levee system, but not at the expense of our eroding coast. Four of the top ten largest ports in the country are in coastal Louisiana. These ports remain strong, are operational, and will continue to operate as some of the most active ports in the world's economy.

No matter how strong Mother Nature is she couldn't destroy the assets that will guide us as we rebuild. The people and cultures of Louisiana are unique and as authentic as anywhere else in the country. Louisiana has a profound impact on American culture, music, food, and commerce. Our culture is rooted in the heritage of its people passed down from one generation to another. In Louisiana, we don't refer to "your home as where you live", in Louisiana "your home is where y'at." Nobody can duplicate the special uniqueness that we have in Louisiana, steeped in our rich cultural heritage that at one time included political abuse by a few.

While incidents of corruption and cronyism may make for a colorful story, it blurs and distorts Louisiana's image to the rest of the country and the world. Current Governor Kathleen Blanco (D) has followed in the footsteps of former Governor Mike Foster's (R) pragmatic style of scandal free governing and above-board practices and ethics. Governor Blanco has committed to hiring one of the country's top four accounting firms to monitor transactions related to the relief efforts. Louisiana's independent Public Affairs Research Council is working to strengthen the state's accountability processes. Louisiana does not engage in cronyism. In fact, Louisiana's sunshine laws (the laws that guarantee the public access to government operations) and ethic codes are some of the most comprehensive in the country.

Having said that, something strange has happened. We were hit by the most destructive natural disaster in the country's history. And about one million of Louisiana's sons and daughters were driven from their homes. Approximately 30,000 are still in shelters around the country and close to 40,000 here in Louisiana, are still today in shelters. We have lost 40% of our businesses. 1,000 of our brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, friends and neighbors have died. We come to Congress, the voice of the American people to seek help. And yet, in the media, at the office water cooler, at the family dinner table and even in the hallways of the Capitol, we have been made to feel corrupt, selfish and unworthy of aid. The cries of caution never surfaced in Florida last year, never surfaced in Mississippi or Texas this year, or in New York after 9/11.

Louisiana does not have exclusive rights to political corruption. In the past ten years, the Governors of New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Arizona, Illinois, Ohio and Alabama have all been indicted on charges ranging from conspiracy to fraud, to exhortation to bribery to ethics violation. The myth that Louisiana politics are more politically corrupt than other states in this great nation is as fallacious as most of the rumors about the storm and our people that were reported by the mainstream media as fact, when we now know they were grossly exaggerated.

Norm Ornstein, the congressional and political expert at the conservative American Enterprise Institute said that, "the American public doesn't have much patience for stories about wasteful spending or corruption." Further, Ornstein states, "Any spate of news stories from now on about corruption in contracts, etc., will hurt – people will resist a major taxpayers' commitment if they think much of it will be wasted *or* lining the pockets of miscreants. That perception unfortunately has been reinforced by recent editorials accusing our Congressional delegation of looting. This same media labeled American citizens who had evacuated refugees. We are not refugees. We are Americans. We pay taxes. We work hard. We serve our country.

I agree with Senator Tom Coburn, R-Okla and Senator Barack Obama, D-Ill: "Hurricane Katrina is the most expensive natural disaster this country has ever faced and the rebuilding will certainly



be the largest and costliest of its kind,” the senators said in their statement. “This entrusts FEMA with massive responsibility, and so it’s only right that we protect both taxpayers and citizens of the Gulf Coast with strict accountability and oversight about how the money is spent and whether it is most efficiently directed to help rebuild lives.”

I also agree with the voice of so many, articulated succinctly by Bob Herbert of the *New York Times* last month, who said that in order for us to understand, “the monumental breakdown of government that contributed mightily to one of the greatest tragedies in American history...we need a highly respected and truly independent commission that is willing to root out all the facts, no matter how embarrassing to the people in power and lay out a reasonable plan for the future.”

However, this independent commission should not view nor investigate this American tragedy from a narrow prism looking only at response time, lack of coordination amongst governmental agencies, communication failures or the obvious inadequacy of FEMA. If this commission of great minds wants to provide a valuable service to the nation it will ask the necessary questions in order to be answered from a historical perspective.

Who really left our American citizens waiting hopelessly at the Convention Center? Why were they trapped? Why did the floodwaters leave them, in particular, so vulnerable? If these questions are asked and answered honestly, we as Americans will be forced to look at ourselves in the mirror and see a picture that we have long tried to ignore.

The answer to the question, who left our American citizens at the Convention Center or Superdome is not, as a small-minded person would think, one person or one agency, like the mayor or the governor or the bus driver who evacuated with his/her family, or even FEMA. The answer is our society left them there. The truth is, for the past 40 years, America, collectively, has ignored its most vulnerable citizens, those living in poverty, which today totals 37 million.

Here particularly, we have found higher common ground. Voices from the left and the right have taken note and roared. Senator Rick Santorum, R-Penn had this to say at the *First International Conservative Conference on Social Justice* last month:

"Too many of my colleagues act as if poverty doesn't exist. Then came Katrina. Our collective blinders were shredded not by wind or rain but by our television sets. We will always remember the pictures of New Orleans, the poor and sick who were forced into the light of day and into our consciousness by the waters of a horrible flood. Theologically, there is this idea of an age of accountability...Katrina brought Americans to the age of accountability when it comes to caring for the poor. No one, no one can deny the persistent and noxious poverty that still plagues this country."

Katrina made the nation come face-to-face with the stark reality that regardless of race, financial means divide us as a country in a way that prevents us from truly recognizing the needs of our neighbors at some of the most vital times of life. We must not let the social disaster of poverty continue. Race was not the underlying factor in who got left behind. What we really saw was the impact of poverty on an entire nation, and we saw it here in the United States.

Gandhi once said, *“We must become the change we want to see”*.

The New South must become this change. In culture, tourism, business, manufacturing, politics and military affairs we can set the pulse for the nation. Today, the New South continues to emerge - in our midst - forming itself from Houston to Dallas from Charlotte to Birmingham from Atlanta to the Carolinas. When we build it back, we will build it back better than before and strive to become the leader of this New South. With this great foundation of culture and people, we can rebuild a place that can finally exceed it's potential.

The number of homes, neighborhoods and lives that will have to be rebuilt is staggering, but the cornerstones of New Orleans and Louisiana survived; our rich heritage and cultural advantages will serve as our guides to the rebirth. If we are going to become the change we seek, then we must start by understanding the true foundation that needs to be rebuilt.

In addition to the daunting task of rebuilding all of the rural south (below I-10 from Texas to Louisiana to Alabama and many small towns and cities in between each unique and precious in their own right, including Lake Charles, Lafayette, Baton Rouge, Houma, Bay St. Louis and Biloxi), we have today, the opportunity to rebuild a great American city - **New Orleans**. What do we want it to look like in 50 or 100 years? In order for the greater New Orleans region to experience its own rebirth, it must recreate itself as both a cultural incubator and technological innovator. New Orleans must balance the entrepreneur and the individual artist. Through this urban creativity, New Orleans will become a center of synergy for the New South region. Why can't New Orleans be home to creators of the next digital information superhighway or the masterminds of the video gaming industry? Why not both?

If Sir Peter Hall, a noted historian of urban centers, is to be taken seriously, then New Orleans is capable of being a center of urban creativity. Great cities like Paris or Athens or Florence or Berlin were both capitalist cities as well as great trading cities fueled by their artistic and innovative networks. I, too, believe in New Orleans' potential. Music, food, culture, art, architecture, historic preservation – these are our strengths and our future.

I know that some have questioned the wisdom of a regional hub of commerce, trade, culture, tourism, and music and so much more in a place so vulnerable to a natural disaster like we have just experienced. But, I have always thought that New Orleans is strategically located to be so much greater than we have ever been in Southeast Louisiana. While celebrating our traditions, New Orleans can seek innovation that will allow Louisiana to globally compete with the best and brightest.

We can and we will challenge current paradigms and assumptions to transform New Orleans and Louisiana; we will tackle the divisions that poverty creates, renounce parochial attitudes, and disavow the perception of corruption and impropriety. For too long we allowed the politics of the day to halt progress that was necessary to address the most critical socio-economic issues of our time.

Through this tragedy, we have the opportunity to set an example for the nation about the power to change when we lean forward, rather than blink.

To me, that power to make the political process work is anchored in a set of guiding principles that can set the tone for the type of region we build and position us as the leader of the New South.

We believe that we can transform ourselves from victims to victors, from followers to leaders if we follow five guiding principles:

- Consider our diversity strength, not a weakness;
- Seek to expand and diversify our economy;
- Think regionally so that we can compete globally;
- Add value to our raw talent and raw materials; and
- Set the highest standards of excellence for all that we do.

To build the New South we envision, we must also position ourselves to move forward on an international stage.

We must foster cooperation. Cooperation between artistic and business communities, dialogue between government and private industry, regional and humanitarian organizations, non-profits, educational institutions and others who seek higher common ground and a shared vision of progress.

AND, above all we must honor our diversity. Diversity of ideas, diversity of people, diversity of cultures. Diversity is our strength and is the backbone of the New South that we seek.

I believe that Louisiana has what it takes to be a leader in the southern region, nationally and internationally. I began in office by issuing a “roadmap for change,” laying out our strategic direction of a new Louisiana in a New South. We have reworked and re-issued this blueprint as the “Louisiana and New Orleans Rebirth Plan.” It may appear ambitious, but we feel that it is our time to bring our vision to fruition.

- Rebuild Louisiana to worldwide preeminence as a top tourist destination;
- Make Louisiana’s cultural economy the engine of economic and social change;
- Build better lives and livelihoods than before for all Louisiana’s people; and
- Make Louisiana’s recovery the standard for high performance accountability and ethical behavior.

This is our time in the South to lead the nation, not to repeat past mistakes. We are about to embark on “opportunity found,” rebuilding the south and its assets from the ground up.

Literally four days before Hurricane Katrina roared through New Orleans, we met in a summit to plot out strategies to place Louisiana and New Orleans as the axis of all things American. A few days later, a people, a culture and a place were altered unbelievably.

Southerners are a strong people. We are grateful for the way the country has welcomed us in the last month. This was an American tragedy that requires a full-hearted American response.

Now we must rebuild. We know it is possible. It is a matter of willpower and money. Many Americans have opened their hearts and their pockets to support relief. But, we need the President, Congress and the American people to remain true to their promises to provide us with the resources we need. We are not looking for a hand out, but a hand up. If the appropriate investments are made to rebuild the South, the people of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama have the willpower to return that investment many times over. We ask for help out of need, not out of greed. It is a humbling experience.

We know it is possible – history tells us so. Communities can be built back. And they can be built back better than they were before. Consider Europe following World War II, without the Marshall Plan, or the countries in Southeast Asia washed away after last year's Tsunami. They were rebuilt out of a sense of public duty because the economies of the world exist in narrow margins.

On American soil, the federal government has stepped up before and provided financial support. New York City declared bankruptcy in 1976 and was rescued by Congress; then sustained the brunt of 9/11 and was cradled by the nation, again. By showing true American character, New York has risen to the challenge of becoming again. Another great American city, built back better than it was before.

The first time visitors from the Southern Hemisphere see the flag of the United States is when they reach the mouth of the Mississippi River. Of course, right below it, they see the words "union, justice, and confidence" on the flag of our great state. Louisiana is their first taste of America and we must be the beacon that gives illumination to all that is great and all that is expected in this region.

Join me in this unprecedented opportunity to rebuild a state relying on Louisiana's rich cultural heritage. Never before in our nation's history has such an opportunity come before us. You are the stewards of our nation's cultural economy and I encourage you to contribute ideas to rebuild an American cultural asset. We have put structures in place to receive and implement the best ideas. We welcome your help and want you to be a part of Louisiana and America's New South history.

What we are really asking is that you help us to restore the "Soul of America." We have married the ambitions of a vibrant Louisiana Cultural Economy with the realities of recent events and designed a Louisiana and New Orleans REBIRTH Plan. It maps our way back to restoring this "soul" with a set of strategic initiatives fueled by the spirit of hope.

With our plan in hand for the Rebirth of Louisiana and New Orleans, we will persevere because we have prepared for this moment to shine. We all want to go home. Like Earnest Gaines wrote:

"I want to smell that Louisiana earth, feel that Louisiana sun, sit under the shade of one of those Louisiana oaks, search for pecans in that Louisiana grass in one of those Louisiana yards next to one of those Louisiana bayous, not far from a Louisiana river. I wanted to see on paper those Louisiana black children walking to school on cold days while yellow Louisiana buses passed them by. I wanted to see on paper those black parents going to work before the sun came up and

coming back home to look after their children after the sun went down. I wanted to see on paper the true reason why those black fathers left home -- not because they were trifling or shiftless, but because they were tired of putting up with certain conditions. I wanted to see on paper the small country churches (schools during the week) and I wanted to hear those simple religious songs, those simple prayers --- that true devotion ... and I wanted to hear that Louisiana dialect --- that combination of English, Creole, Cajun, black. For me there's no more beautiful sound anywhere --- unless, of course, you take exceptional pride in 'proper' French or 'proper' English. I wanted to read about the true relationship between whites and blacks --- about the people I had known.”

Now faced with the challenge to rebuild our region of the country and an international city / America's great city / we must all lock arms, lean forward, stay focused and rebuild one of America's strongest assets. Only then can the New South rise from the ashes of tragedy and become for the world a beacon of hope and opportunity.

Thank you.

# **DRAFT**

## **EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT** **EXECUTIVE ORDER NO.**

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***LOUISIANA INDEPENDENT PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY PANEL FOR RESULTS, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND ETHICAL EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS ALLOCATED FOR CULTURE, RECREATION AND TOURISM***

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**WHEREAS**, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor and the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism have created an ambitious rebuilding plan, "Louisiana Rebirth: Restoring the Soul of America";

**WHEREAS**, considerable state, federal and private resources will be committed to this plan, and it is essential that we achieve these results and demonstrate the highest standards of accountability and ethical behavior.

**WHEREAS**, the Louisiana Rebirth plan calls for the establishment of “a third-party performance and financial audit-function that will design and implement a system to safeguard the proper use of funds”, and the Lieutenant Governor has asked that I establish and charter this independent review panel,

**NOW THEREFORE I, KATHLEEN BABINEAUX BLANCO**, Governor of the state of Louisiana, by virtue of the authority vested by the Constitution and laws of the state of Louisiana, do hereby order and direct as follows:

**SECTION 1:** The Louisiana Independent Performance Accountability Panel (hereafter “Panel”) shall be established and created.

**SECTION 2:** The duties of the Panel shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Facilitate achievements of the four results specified in the plan:
  - 1. Rebuild Louisiana to worldwide preeminence as a top tourist destination.
  - 2. Make Louisiana’s cultural economy the engine of economic and social change.
  - 3. Build better lives and livelihoods than before for all Louisiana’s people.
  - 4. Make Louisiana’s recovery the standard for high performance, accountability and ethical behavior.
- B. Develop a work plan for the Panel.

- C. Review all sources of funds to implement the Louisiana Rebirth plan, including but not limited to: federal, state and local funds and funds from the Cultural Economy Foundation.
- D. Regularly review and report the results achieved from the expenditure of funds.
- E. Recommendations for changes in State legislation, procedures or practices that would improve performance, including budgeting, performance management and accounting.

**SECTION 3:** The Panel shall submit an annual report to the public at large, the governor, the president of the Louisiana Senate, and the speaker of the Louisiana House of Representatives on the results and reviews referred to in Section 2 of this Order.

**SECTION 4:** The Review Board shall be composed of a maximum of eight (8) members who, unless otherwise specified, shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the governor. No member shall be an employee of any level of Louisiana government. The membership of the Review Panel shall include at least the following:

- A. A person with expertise in public accounting standards as exhibited by a relationship with the Government Accounting Standards Board;
- B. A person with broad expertise in administering performance systems and accounting standards associated with the Government Finance Officers Association;
- C. A private sector business leader from outside Louisiana.
- D. A current or former federal auditor.
- E. A current or former state official from outside Louisiana.
- F. A current or former city official from outside Louisiana.

G. Two (2) appointees designated made by the Governor.**SECTION 5:** The chair of the Review Panel shall be appointed by the governor from the membership of the Review Panel. All other officers, if any, shall be elected by the membership of the Review Panel.

**SECTION 6:** Support staff, facilities, and resources for the Review shall be provided by the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism.

**SECTION 7:** All departments, commissions, boards, offices, entities, agencies, and officers of the state of Louisiana, or any political subdivision thereof, are authorized and directed to cooperate with the Review Panel in implementing the provisions of this Order.

**SECTION 8:** This Order is effective upon signature and shall continue in effect until amended, modified, terminated, or rescinded by the governor, or terminated by operation of law.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have set my hand officially and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of Louisiana, at the Capitol, in the city of Baton Rouge, on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of October, 2005.

Kathleen Babineaux Blanco  
**GOVERNOR OF LOUISIANA**

**ATTEST BY  
THE GOVERNOR**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**SECRETARY OF STATE**